

Confessions: Sleepover Style by climbergirlio

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Summary: The boys have a sleepover with El. Mike gets embarrassed. El is herself. For once, they all get to be normal teenagers. (I don't own Stranger Things, much to my absolute dismay.)

1. Chapter 1

After much pleading and begging, all the boys plus El were in the Wheeler basement for a sleepover. It was their very first all together, and Mike especially was excited. The boys had spent the week at school planning out what they were going to do for El's very first sleepover, and ultimately decided to play all the sleepover style games. Lucas had been put in charge of that. Dustin was in charge of snacks, and Will movies. Mike's task had been the hardest. He had had to get his mother to agree to let him have the sleepover

It had taken quite a while, Karen not exactly happy at the prospect of a mixed gender sleepover, a point backed by Joyce, who had taken Eleven in. Actually, none of the parents were. The boys knew, however, that if Mike could get his Mom to agree, the other parents would too. So Mike had prepared himself for his task, and had walked down to the kitchen.

"So, Mom, I was wondering if we could talk about the sleepover again?" he asked.

"Michael, we've talked about this and my answer is still no," Karen Wheeler said firmly. However, this time her son had a plan.

"I know, it's just that, El never has been to a sleepover on accounted being in that *place*," Mike spat out, "and life can be so short," he added a pained sad face, "we just want El to experience everything she can."

"Not to mention all the boys are incredibly protective of Eleven," Nancy added from the top of the staircase.

"We can order a pizza with our saved up money. You won't even have to cook!" Mike offered.

"Alright fine. But you will be in charge of cleaning up the basement afterwards," she said sternly.

"Deal," Mike said happily, surprised at how easy that had been.

So now they were all gathered for Eleven's inaugural sleepover. Dungeons and Dragons had been discussed, but El still was working on mastering the rules and Mike didn't have a campaign ready anyways. At the moment they were working on practically inhaling the pizza they had ordered.

"What do you want to do first?" Will asked.

"Well I brought a list of the most popular sleepover games. I went to the library and researched it!" Lucas exclaimed happily. He still felt bad about how he had treated El, even though she accepted his apology ages ago. He continued to try and make it up to her in every way possible.

"We could also watch Star Wars," Dustin offered, "I brought snacks!"

"I did bring Star Wars," Will said.

"You pick, El, it's your first sleepover," Mike said.

"Games?" El asked shyly.

"Ok so, I have Monopoly, Clue, Cards, Poker, and I know the official rules for Truth or Dare, Never Have I Ever, and we could play with Will's Atari. He brought it," Lucas said.

"Isn't Never Have I Ever a drinking game?" Dustin asked.

"Well yes, but I figured we could play with marbles instead."

"What is Clue?" El asked.

"It's a mystery game. Basically, a character commits a crime and the players have to figure out who committed it, where, and with what," Mike explained.

"Fun?"

The boys exchanged a glance, "yeah, fun."

They then proceeded to give Eleven a more in depth explanation of the rules. Bluffing had her very confused. "But friends don't lie?" "In

games it's okay. And it's not really lying. You just ask people if they have a card you already have so you can figure out one of the other objects." Then they set up the board, and chose pieces. Eleven was also confused as to why she didn't know that she hadn't done the crime. Mike was the only one who had any success explaining that to her. He was usually the one who knew what to say to make her understand. He liked explaining things to her anyways. He liked the way her eyes lit up when she understood, and how she would give him that gentle smile.

The game started off slowly, the boys going a bit easier then they usually would in order to help El understand. Eventually, she got it. They played Clue a few times, and much to the surprise of everyone El won every single game. Dustin and Lucas claimed it was beginners luck. El just smirked at them.

"What now?" Dustin asked.

"Monopoly?" Will wondered.

"Too much explaining for tonight, I think," Mike vocalized.

The others nodded agreement.

"Plus Mike ALWAYS wins," Dustin added, "let's play Lucas' drinking game without the drinking."

"So basically," said Lucas, pouring marbles into a pile on the floor, "someone says something they have never done, and then they pick up a marble. If you have done it, don't take a marble. No lying in this game. You don't necessarily have to explain when exactly you did the thing if you don't want to, though. At the end we'll count marbles to see who has done the least meaning they have the most marbles, and who has done the most, meaning they have the least marbles. Make sense?"

Everyone nodded.

"Alright, you first Will."

"Never have I ever pretended to be sick so I could stay home."

Eleven took a marble.

"Really, Mike? You have?" Will asked.

"Yup," he said, but didn't elaborate.

"Never have I ever had even the tiniest crush on Leia," Lucas declared.

Both Will and Eleven took marbles with Lucas.

"Do you even know what a crush is El?" Will asked.

El nodded, "Nancy," she said by way of explanation.

"Never have I ever played a sport," Dustin said.

Will and Eleven joined him in grabbing marbles.

"Lucas and I tried soccer in kindergarten," Mike explained.

"They almost kicked him off the team!" Lucas laughed.

"I was pretty bad," Mike laughed.

"It's your turn El," said Will once their friends had finished shoving each other around.

"Never... Never have I ever... Had long hair."

Everyone went for a marble, but Lucas argued that both Will and Mike had long hair, at least in comparison to his. Mike argued back that then Dustin had long hair too. Dustin said his hair was curly so it didn't count. In the end Dustin, Lucas, and Eleven took marbles.

"Guys this is wayyy not fair. I have no marbles," Mike complained.

"Well it's your turn," said Dustin.

"Never have I ever told a really truly believable lie to get out of trouble."

Everyone took a marble. They were all awful liars.

They played many more rounds, laughing at the ridiculous things their friends said. "Never have I ever almost set fire to the science classroom," earned Lucas a smack from Dustin and sent them all into laughter. "Never have I ever not liked eggos," made all the boys struggle not laugh. "Never have I ever could have wished for better friends," made everyone awww at Will and head to him for a group hug. They all took marbles that round.

Finally, as the marbles were running low, (and mostly possessed by Will and El), Lucas said what Mike had been dreading since the beginning of the game.

"Never have I ever kissed anyone."

Lucas and Will grabbed marbles. Dustin did too, but a bit more sadly. Mike contemplated grabbing one, but he knew El would all innocently bust him by saying friends don't lie.

"El, you have?" Dustin asked as soon as he realized she wasn't going to grab one.

"When?!" Lucas asked.

"Who?" Dustin asked.

"You know, El, you don't have to tell them," Will said apologetically.

"But we would really like to know!" Dustin added.

"Uhhhh." Was her only response.

"Was it any good? At least tell us that," Dustin pleaded.

El smiled a small smile, "it was... nice."

At this point Mike was bright red, and El's words, which were reassuring because she had actually *liked* it, did not help the state of his now even redder face.

"So Mikey, not half bad at kissing," Lucas teased.

"I...I...I mean...um."

"Oh please, Mike, not all of us are as oblivious as you are. When'd it happen?" Dustin sighed.

"Putting," said El

"What?" Will asked.

Mike sighed, "pudding. Remember, El?"

She nodded, "chocolate goo?"

Mike nodded and smiled at her, "exactly."

Dustin looked confused and then seemed to understand, "last year? When Lucas and I raised the fridge for the lunch lady's stash?"

El nodded hesitantly.

"How'd it happen?" Lucas asked.

El began to say something, but Mike cut her off, "they do not need to know, El. This is one of those privacy things, understand?"

She nodded.

"Ok, let's keep playing then," Mike offered.

"Um can we just watch Star Wars?" Will questioned.

"Sure!" Lucas agreed, "but first, count up your marbles."

In the end, Mike had the least marbles, and Will had the most. Both by quite a bit, which surprised everyone. The boys had all assumed that, as a lab rat for 12 years, El would have experienced the least. Nobody said that aloud, however. Nobody seemed too surprised that Mike had the least amount of marbles, which baffled him. He had always thought that they were all about equal experience level. Dustin and Lucas seemed to be, at least.

"Who's making the popcorn?" Dustin inquired, always thinking about food.

"What is popcorn?" El asked.

"It's like this puffy stuff that has a buttery flavor. Actually, I'll show you, come on up," Mike settled upon.

Together, they climbed the stairs and entered the kitchen. Nancy and Jonathan were sitting at the table, and upon peeking at what they were doing, Mike discovered it was college applications. Why Nancy was doing college applications with Jonathan and not her boyfriend, Steve, Mike wasn't sure. Why Nancy was dating Steve and not Jonathan was a mystery in itself.

"Hey, El," Nancy said affectionately.

"Hi, Nancy," said El shyly.

"How are ya, Ellie?" Jonathan asked.

She smiled, "good."

"What, nobody cares that I'm here?" Mike pretended to be hurt.

"I am happy you're here, Mike," said El sweetly.

"Awwwwww," Nancy clapped, "you guys are so cute! Aren't they so cute."

"Uh, sure?" Jonathan agreed, "but that's my sort of sister there, so be careful."

Mike was bright red again, "and we are making popcorn!"

Nancy smiled as though she knew a secret, "we'll just be leaving. There's something in the woods we need to check out."

"At night?!" Mike was incredulous.

"If mom asks, I'm at Jonathan's finishing up my applications. If Steve stops by for whatever reason, tell him we are already in the woods."

"Sure, whatever," Mike shook his head, "c'mon, El. I'll show you what popcorn is."

Her eyes lit up, "yay!"

Mike grabbed the popcorn bag and put it in the microwave, explaining what would happen as he went along. El sat on the counter and watched, fascinated. Mike always felt like he had taken too much for granted when she was around. Here she was, fascinated by microwave popcorn. And it hadn't even started popping yet.

"Mike?"

"Yeah?"

"Why is kissing private?"

"Um well. I mean, it doesn't have to be. It just usually is you know? Didn't Nancy explain? She probably would be better at explaining than I would."

"Nancy said that kissing is for two people who like each other very much. They are each other's favorite," she said earnestly.

"You're my favorite Mike."

"Um, thanks El, you're my favorite, too, I guess."

Suddenly, the popcorn started popping, and El jumped, startled.

"It's okay. The popcorn is just popping. You know, getting puffy," Mike attempted to calm her.

"Getting...puffy?"

"Yeah."

"So why privacy?"

"Um I mean, like I said, it doesn't have to be. Usually, people just like privacy because they don't want to feel embarrassed. Kissing is kinda a special thing between two people too, and they like to keep it special by keeping it a secret, just between them."

"Embarrassed?"

"Yeah, um it's when you kinda turn red and you feel like everyone is

staring at you. You feel uncomfortable."

"Oh. Embarrassed now?"

"Um. A bit."

"It is pretty."

"Uh, thanks," Mike said, even more embarrassed.

Suddenly, the timer on the microwave went off, startling both of them.

"The popcorn's ready!" Mike told her.

He pulled it out of the microwave, and opened it up. Then he found a bowl and poured it in. He held the bowl out to Eleven, and she picked up a piece. He did too, and put it in his mouth, silently telling her it was good food. He laughed at her face.

"Like it?"

"Yes!"

"Let's bring it down to the guys."

He led the way down the stairs and into the basement. El plodded behind him silently.

"Popcorn!" he announced.

All the boys scrambled off the couch and rushed at him. Dustin gained control of the bowl, and lept onto the couch. Everyone followed him. Will pressed the play button on the Star Wars movie, and the opening credits came on. Everyone settled, and engrossed themselves in the movie. El was sitting so close to Mike he could hardly pay attention to the movie. That was problematic since she was asking him about everything. He explained everything, too. It was a very good thing that he had already seen the movie several times over.

After the movie they played another few rounds of clue, before

everyone was sick of El continuing to demolish them. Will vowed that they would play again in the morning, because there was no way they could all lose every game. El just gave a small smirk. They all then went to change into pajamas.

Mike wandered up from the basement to get changed into his pajamas, which were up in his room. He stopped by the kitchen to drop off the popcorn bowl in the sink, rinsing it out. His mom always wanted him to do it, and it seemed like a good idea to have her in a good disposition for the next time they all wanted a sleepover. And the next time, maybe Max would be able to come. That would be even more controversial. This time she had been busy. He dried the bowl and put it away. He then continued towards his room.

He changed into his favorite pair of pajamas, heading out of the room quietly. He turned around and nearly smacked straight into Eleven, who had been right behind him. "Ack!" he yelped, jumping away on reflex and hitting his head on the doorframe.

She quirked an eyebrow at him, "ok, Mike?"

He rubbed his head, "yeah, I'm fine. Uh, why are you up here?"

"Nancy," she said, and showed him what he assumed was one of his sisters old nightgowns.

"Ah," he said, "see ya downstairs then?"

She nodded, "yes."

Mike then headed softly down the stairs, shaking his head a bit, as if to clear it. He wasn't quite sure when Nancy and Eleven had become so close, it had just sort of happened all at once. Nancy was terribly excited and had taken El in as a sister, as she would never really get to be one for Holly, due to the age gap between them. She'd be out of the house before Holly would really be capable of having hair braiding sessions and the like. Mike knew this because Nancy frequently went on about how El was like her little sister. Mike, however, still remained adamant that El **would not** be his sister. His reasoning as of late had been that El lived with the Byers, therefore she was more like Will's sister than his.

He wandered back down into the basement and sat on the couch distractedly. The boys all looked at him with varying degrees of curiosity. He remained oblivious of them at the moment, still lost in thoughts about El. He wondered if she would still want to go to the snowball with him, now that she knew more about what it meant. He finally looked up, and caught his friends' gazes.

"What?" he asked.

"What took you so long?" Lucas asked.

"What? Nothing. I put away the popcorn bowl and got changed. Oh, and I almost ran right into El," he detailed.

"I'll just bet," Lucas smirked.

"What? No! It's not like that!" he heard himself echoing his sister's words from a year before. He once more wondered how true they were when she said them. He had an inkling both of them had been lying that night. He once more wondered why Nancy was still dating Steve. She spent far more time with Jonathan. He shook his head. El tramped down the steps, bringing all the boys attention to her.

"Now what?" El asked.

"Now we go to bed," said Will.

"Oh. Ok," she smiled, and went into her little blanket fort.

Dustin managed to be the first to claim the couch. Will and Lucas snagged the rug, and that left Mike on the ground next to Eleven. He was secretly happy about how that had worked out. They all talked until one by one they all fell asleep.

"Mike?" a quiet voice whispered sweetly.

"Yeah, El?" he whispered back.

"Is this privacy?"

"Uh, I guess," he responded, confused.

"Good," and to his great surprise, she leaned over and kissed him on the lips.

"Oh. Um. Wow," he stutters, unable to make coherent words.

"I like kissing you Mike," El whispered confidently, "it makes me feel sparkly."

"Me too," he whispered back, and then, feeling reckless, he kissed her.

"Night, El," he smiled.

"Night, Mike," she smiled back.

And when they both laid back down, their hands finding each other's over the covers. The next morning, their friends found them like that, both sleeping peacefully with smiles on their faces.

2. Chapter 2

A/N:Light spoilers for season two. This takes place before the snowball, and after the first chapter. Hope you enjoy!

Max and El were sitting alone in the Wheeler basement, waiting for the boys to come. They had had some sort of AV club holdup or something. Needless to say, neither Max nor El were very happy about this. Especially considering the disdain El had for Max. After they had been sitting in determined silence for ten minutes, Max finally addressed the subject they had both been avoiding, or rather the fact that they had both been at very best, avoiding each other.

"Why do you hate me so much?"

El glanced over at Max.

"Okay fine. Don't tell me. I only wanted to know what I did."

El sighed, "was worried Mike would like you better."

Max laughed.

El looked put out, "not funny!"

"Sorry, Eleven. It's just that he's so in love with you. Did you know, he hated me for the longest time? He didn't want me to be in the party. He said that you were already in the party and that I couldn't be. He only barely tolerated my presence, and only very recently thought of me as a friend."

"Really?" El asked.

"Really. You're Mike's favorite person," Max assured her.

"I know. He said so."

"I'll tell you a secret," Max offered, "I like Lucas the way you like Mike."

"He's your favorite?"

"Of the boys? Yeah."

"Have you kissed him?"

"Uh no. Have you kissed Mike?"

"Twice."

Then, El covered her mouth, "I'm not supposed to tell you that. It's supposed to be privacy."

Max smiled at the use of the word privacy, but didn't correct it. One battle at a time, "it's ok. Girls can tell each other things that they wouldn't tell to boys. Just like boys might tell each other things they wouldn't tell to girls. But that's definitely something you shouldn't tell Hopper, or he won't let you see Mike as much."

El nodded, a bit scared, "I won't tell Lucas you're his favorite, and I definitely won't tell Hopper about kissing Mike."

Max smiled, "thanks El."

"Max?"

"Yeah?"

"Can we be friends now?"

"I'd like that."

"Me...too." El smiled shyly at Max. Max gave her a wide grin back.

Just then, the door to the Wheeler's house opened, and footsteps banged on the ceiling of the basement. Max and El raced up the stairs to greet the boys.

"We made it!" Dustin announced.

"Hey El!" Mike said.

El's eyes lit up, "hi Mike!"

They hugged. All the boys rolled their eyes, but secretly thought they

were cute.

"Who's ready for some D&D?" Mike asked after he and El had broken apart.

There was a chorus of me's and they all trooped to the basement. Neither El nor Max had played with the boys before, and El didn't really understand the rules. Together, they decided to team up. It came as a bit of a shock to the boys, because even they weren't dense enough to not notice the tenseness. They didn't complain, though. If the girls got along, it would be easier for all of them. Not to mention, they had all eavesdropped on Hopper and Joyce talking about El needing a girl friend to sort of be an example. None of them said any of this aloud, however.

After hours of D&D, they all agreed to continue the campaign in the morning, and decided to watch a movie instead. There was a lot of arguing about what movie to watch, especially between Dustin and Lucas. Dustin thought they should watch E.T., and Lucas wanted to watch Ghostbusters or Poltergeist. Will seemed to be leaning towards E.T., not particularly caring for scary movies. El had no idea what any of the movies were, which was why this was a debate in the first place.

"E.T., for sure. El's like a real life E.T. Don't you want to see the fictional you, El?" Dustin said.

"But ghostbusters is so cool. It was our costume for Halloween. Don't you want to understand our Halloween costume, El?" Lucas asked.

At the sudden object of the conversation being her, El stopped what she had been doing (staring at the top of the stairs waiting for Mike to come back with the pizza his mom had ordered) and turned towards the boys. She shrugged in a way she hoped was noncommittal.

They went back to arguing with each other, and El went back to staring at the top of the stairs. Her patience was rewarded when two feet appeared at the top of the staircase. The two feet soon turned into a complete Mike, who was grinning from ear to ear, carrying down the pizza. He set the box on the ground, effectively stopping

the argument as everyone grabbed the slices eagerly.

There was five minutes of silence as everyone munched on the pizza. Those five moments of savory silence were broken when, once more, Dustin and Lucas started arguing. There was a collective sigh from the other four people present.

"Well I don't have a copy of ghostbusters yet. It only just released," Mike reasoned, "and Poltergeist," he glanced at El, "we can watch that another day, sometime in the future, sorry Lucas."

Lucas sighed sadly.

"It's ok, Lucas," Max offered, "E.T. is a pretty good movie too. And we can let you pick the snack."

Everyone nodded.

Lucas smiled, "ok that's fine."

Decision thus made, everyone sprung into action. Max and Lucas went to gather snacks, Dustin set about getting the movie ready, Mike carefully moved the D&D game out of the way, and Will and Eleven set about arranging areas for people to sit on the floor. They piled several layers of blankets atop the old camping mats that Lucas and Will had brought, and the rug. Max and Will were on the ends, and they got the mats. Lucas was next to Max and Dustin, on the rug. Dustin was on the rug too, but next to Will. El had her little blanket fort, obviously, and Mike was on the ground next to her, in the only available space left. They had positioned the TV in a way so that it faced the Hess of where all the people were sleeping, and the couch. It was not a simple feat and, by that time, Dustin and Mike were done and had to help out as well.

Finally, everything was arranged. Mike and El took up residence on the couch, and Will and Dustin snuggled into their blankets. Max and Lucas emerged with the snacks, popcorn, pretzels and lots of leftover Halloween candy. Everyone grabs some of everything. Someone presses play, and the movie starts.

The movie is spent much like last time, El leaning up against Mike,

whispering questions. He does his best to answer, at one point he even pauses the video and digs out the Reese's pieces from the candy jar. This earns him complaints from everyone else, but it's well worth it for him to see the smile that lights up El's face when she tries the candy. He would do absolutely anything to see her smile.

Soon enough, the movie is over.

"Did you like the movie, El?" Mike asks.

She nods, "I liked Elliot. He is like you."

Mike isn't quite sure what to say in response, but is saved by another argument that Dustin and Lucas have started over whether or not to watch another movie. Everyone else takes this as an opportunity to get changed into their pajamas.

By the time everyone gathered back in the basement, Dustin and Lucas had agreed upon re-watching a Star Wars movie. Everyone snuggled into blankets, and the opening started. Eleven scooted even closer to Mike, leaning her head on his shoulder and taking his hand, which made him immediately both lose track of what was going on, and hope of knowing what was going on for the rest of the movie. He was mostly just enraptured by the magnificent girl next to him. He had missed her for so long, and now she was right here, her head on his shoulder. It felt as though he was once more complete.

At some point during the movie, El falls asleep on Mike's shoulder. He has the fleeting intention of moving her to the blanket fort after the movie is over, but soon his own eyelids are drooping, and he realizes just before he drifts off that the idea is futile. It wasn't even as though he could carry her anyways.

Some several hours later when the sun is once more shining, Dustin begins to stir, always an early riser. As soon as Dustin shows signs of movement, Will's up too, and then Lucas. The three of them try to be quiet, but teenage boys only can stay still for so long, and eventually they all sit up and begin to untangle themselves. Will has the easiest time of it, being on the end. Once Will gets out, Dustin doesn't have any trouble. Lucas tries to be careful, but Max ends up waking up anyways. She sends him a glare.

"Well apparently I'm up now, thanks, Stalker," she whispers under her breath, venom laced into the words.

Lucas gains a look that is more or less like a deer caught in the headlights, and Max rolls her eyes.

"I was already up, no need to be all sorry. Geez." She slips out of the blankets with catlike talent, moving to where Dustin and Will are standing, staring openly at Mike and El.

El has her head on Mike, who is slumped on the arm of the couch. Their hands are entwined above the blanket they had been sharing, but is currently only covering Eleven. Dustin is already having a laughing fit. Lucas then looks up too, and rolls his eyes, as he really hadn't expected to not find them cuddling or being sickeningly cute. Dustin snickers and throws a pillow at Mike's face before anyone can say anything. This wakes the boy up with a start, and he sits up in shock, a frightened look apparent in his eyes before they adjust to the light and take in the basement. He gives Dustin a glare so harsh it could melt ice in winter, and looks to El, who is now stirring. Satisfied that he has gotten everyone up, Dustin flees to the stairs. Everyone else sighs as Dustin cackles from the safety of the upstairs.

"Well I guess we're up now," Max sighs.

"Breakfast and then more games?" Mike asks.

"Eggos?!"

"Of course."

The other five friends clamber up the steps, and after hunting down the sixth and doling out due punishment, they gather round the breakfast table. Waffles are distributed, and if only for right now, everyone is completely, utterly happy.

THE END

A/N: This is dedicated to my friend, for motivating me to write a second chapter. That's the end, unless I get enough people asking me to write another chapter.

3. Chapter 3

El is flitting around the cabin in a fit of nerves. At 4:30 Hopper will be back. With *Mike*. With Mike so Mike and El can have a sleepover. A just them sleepover. Of course, Hopper has already mandated that Mike will be on the couch and they'll have to be in bed by 10:00, but El doesn't care because Mike is coming. According to Hopper, he's coming to help her with schoolwork, but Will does that on the days she and Hopper spend at the Byers', but Mike brings her assignments and work, and teaches her once a week, sometimes more. She doesn't tell Will, but she likes Mike teaching her better. Not that it's really a fair comparison. She likes most things about Mike better. Well, she likes all things about Mike better, if she's honest with herself.

Suddenly there's the tapping of the secret knock on the door. Lost in her musings, El hadn't realized the time. She flies to the door, opening it to reveal Hopper and Mike.

"Mike!"

She practically tackles him in a hug.

"Jesus. You saw each other like three days ago," Hopper grumbles.

Eleven gives him a look. He raises his hands in apparent defeat, stepping by them into the cabin. El takes Mike's hand, pulling him impatiently along. He laughs, and shrugs off his backpack, letting it fall to the ground with a decisive thump.

"Are you ready to get started?" he asks excitedly, "I brought a bunch of assignments and books!"

She nods, and he begins setting out the stuff.

It's about halfway through the science work that El first noticed it. Mike has yet to take off his sweater, even though the cabin is plenty warm. El and Hopper are both in long sleeve shirts with the sleeves rolled up. Neither of them like to be cold, so Hopper keeps the heat up. Therefore, Mike should have already taken off his jacket. She studies him more closely, he isn't visibly hot, but still. She drops the

thought, as he begins his explanation.

"Get it?" He asks.

El has no idea what he had been saying, "yes."

He gives her a look.

"Okay. I don't know what you were saying," she relents.

He begins explaining again, nonplussed. That's the nice thing about Mike. He never gets frustrated with her.

"Mike?" She asks gently.

He looks up immediately, "Yeah, El?"

"Aren't you hot?"

He looks caught off guard, "no!" His voice is a bit too high.

El has learned that friends CAN lie, and she has the notion that Mike might be right now. She decides to test her theory.

She turns around, "Hopper?"

"Yes?" He responds from his place in front of the TV in the couch.

"Eggo break?"

"Not right now, kid."

She hadn't really expected a different answer, but the exchange had given her the opportunity to reach out with her mind to the thermostat, and manipulate it so the temperature was higher than it showed. She was only doing this because when Mike lied to her it was because he was embarrassed- she had just learned that word- to say anything. El figures he had simply forgotten to put on a shirt on under his sweater, and was too embarrassed to admit it.

After completing her task, she tuned back into what Mike was saying. After finishing up the science, they decided to break for dinner. Hopper heated up some TV dinners.

"How's the school going?" Hopper asked.

"We got all the way through science and math!" Mike said happily.

"Ah" Hopper said.

"We can probably tackle History and Reading tonight, and then do Writing in the morning," Mike informs him.

Hopper looks surprised, "you were planning on doing school all night?"

"I mean...isn't that why you let me come over?" Mike asked.

"Jesus, kid, have you only ever done school work every time you've been over?"

"Um, yeah?" Mike said, obviously unsure of what was happening.

Hopper starts all out laughing, "wow. I knew you and your friends were a pretty nerdy bunch, but I had no idea."

Mike gives him a quizzical look, "you've been here every time I've been here. What did you think we were doing?"

Hopper shrugged, "I figured you did some work and then played games."

Mike looked bewildered, "well you told me to come to teach El, so I did."

Hopper laughed, "How'd you like to come and teach El every other day?"

Mike sat up, "I'd love to!"

"Good," Hopper said.

"Yay!" Eleven said, speaking for the first time in a while.

Both Hopper and Mike looked over at her, as if they had forgotten she was there. She gave them both radiant smiles, and continued eating. There was a bit of silence as they all ate. Finally, Hopper

broke it, "Isn't it really hot?"

El nodded, "really."

Hopper looked at Mike, and then said, a bit incredulously, "you have to be hot in that sweater."

Mike squirmed a bit in his chair, "a bit."

"You can take it off, " El said gently.

"I'm okay," Mike said, clearly uncomfortable.

"Mike?" El was genuinely worried now, "what's wrong?"

Mike looked mortified at the attention, but seemed to realize he wasn't going to get out of taking his sweater off. He sighed deeply before pulling off the sweater. For a millisecond, all El could do was admire his freshly tousled hair. Her attention was quickly drawn to the bright red bruises on his arms.

"Mike?!" She breathed with concern.

Hopper's gaze was concerned too, but also angry, "who did this to you?"

"My dad," he admitted, ashamed.

El gasped. She had thought that all parents were good people. Well, her papa wasn't, but she figured it was simply because she grew up in the lab. And even when they were rough with her, they never were harsh enough to leave marks. And anyways, she had always thought that Mike's parents were good people. How could they not be? Mike was so good, so kind, so understanding, and so was Nancy. She had naturally assumed, that therefore, their parents were too. Maybe she was just wrong, though, and all parents were like that. Hopper wasn't, but he was her *adoptive dad*. She was very happy with that. Hopper was much better than Papa. Maybe Mike could come and live with her and Hopper for a while. She now knew why he couldn't be her brother, but didn't see why they couldn't live together, after all, Nancy sometimes spent the night with Jonathan.

While El had been musing, Hopper had been gently examining Mike's arm. "These are recent kid," he took a deep breath, "how many times did he hit you?"

Mike turned away, "a few."

He picked up a fork, obviously trying to avoid the topic.

"Mike," El said gently, coming over and laying a hand on his arm.

She had no idea where she was going with this, all she knew was that Mike was hurting, and she HAD to stop it. If their positions were reversed, Mike would have already said exactly the right thing to make her feel better. She wasn't as good with words as him, so she simply just gave him a hug. Hopefully he could understand the sentiment behind it.

He hugged her back just as tightly. "Mike," she pushed him away gently, "you don't need to be embarrassed. Just because he hurt you doesn't mean it's your fault." That had been one of the first things Hopper had taught her. "He hurts because he is bad. Not because you are. You are Mike and you are my favorite. You are the best."

"El's right, kid. This is by no way your fault. No matter what he said to you to justify his actions, **it is not your fault**. What did bring this on, though? I'm the chief of police and I won't let this stand."

Mike wouldn't meet either of their eyes, "it doesn't matter."

"Mike," Hopper said.

Mike sighed, then almost unwillingly began to speak, "I was leaving the house. He asked me where I was going, so I told him I was going to Will's house. He got angry that I'm not at home as much anymore, and I said I would be back tomorrow. He said I needed to stay home, and I told him that I was going to go to Will's house, and that it would be rude to stand up Ms. Byers. He said I couldn't go, and that it didn't matter what Ms. Byers thought. So I asked him why he was so against it. Then," Mike's voice broke here, "then her called Will a fag," Mike then hurried to add, "amongst other choice insults."

There was some silence. Hopper looked angry. El had no idea what a

fag was, but it obviously wasn't a good thing.

Mike rushed to continue on, "I yelled at him then. I wasn't just going to let him get away with it. Especially after all that's happened. I just couldn't. He started yelling too, and then before I knew it, he was on top of me, holding me down by my arms and punching me in the stomach. He'd never even think of hitting anywhere that would leave a mark that couldn't be covered," Mike sounded bitter, now.

"He's hit you before?" Hopper asked.

"Well, no, but I know him well enough to know that. He is my father, after all."

There is another moment of silence.

"Just, Hopper, don't say anything, okay?" Hopper looks ready to object, but Mike continues on, "he'd be so mad and it would probably be the last straw and my parents would get divorced, and I don't want Holly to have to grow up like that, her first memories being of separated parents. Anyways, it's probably just a one-off."

Hopper does not look too pleased, "if that's what you really want kid. Just so I'm sure we are clear, though, if I even get any whispers of something like this happening again, I'll be coming round. Understood?"

"Of course. I'd tell you myself. I really do believe it was just a one time thing. He had probably had some drinks."

"As an officer of the law, I should really be acting on this, but if you don't want me too, that is still your choice," Hopper tells him.

Mike nods emphatically, wincing a little as he does so. How had El not noticed that before? Had he been doing it the whole time? He had certainly been gesturing less in their lessons. When he had dumped his backpack on the ground, he had done so more gingerly, hadn't he? She probably shouldn't have hugged him! It had likely only made things worse. She couldn't believe she hadn't noticed. Mike would have noticed if it were her. How was it that he was so observant, so attuned to her?

"Can we watch a movie?" El asks. When she's feeling bad, she loves to watch movies.

"Sure," Hopper says, "what movie?"

There is a bit of a debate over that. Hopper only has a few movies, one of which was star wars, because El had requested it after learning that was what Yoda was from. In that year without Mike she had done literally everything she could think of to remind herself of him. It had taken a tremendous effort, but eventually Hopper had promised to pick up a copy for her. The first time she had watched it, she had watched it alone. She had understood almost nothing. The second time, Hopper had reluctantly agreed to watch it with her, and even explained the most confusing parts. She had watched it several times since then, and she had a better understanding. She got why Mike liked it.

They rushed to finish up their dinner after that. Or, more accurately, El and Mike rushed to finish their dinner after that. Hopper was not as eager. That didn't really surprise anyone present. Mike was practically bouncing with excitement, and so was El. Mainly, she was just happy to not have to do any more schoolwork.

Dinner was FINALLY finished, and they all headed over to the couch. El sat in the middle, and was sharing a blanket with Mike. He had grabbed her hand under the blanket after only a minute's hesitation. El was already happy with this choice of activity. Hopper, meanwhile, sat back down and hit play. The movie started.

Mike and El spent most of the movie whispering quietly. El asked questions and Mike did his best to explain things in a way that would make sense to her. Neither let go of the other's hand.

At last, the credits began rolling, and they all sat there in a sort of stunned silence. Hopper said something about making some popcorn before watching the next one. Mike and El shared an excited look. El would have never guessed back when she was in the lab that her future would be holding hands with the world's sweetest boy while her adoptive dad made popcorn. She had so many people who cared about her now. It was unfathomable. She had friends in Lucas, Dustin, Will, even Max. Jonathan, Nancy, and sort of Steve were like

older siblings. She had found her mama, and her Aunt Becky. She had a sister, even if she wasn't always the best. Joyce was like her second mama. And, of course, Mike and Hopper. They were on their own levels completely.

Hopper handed El a bowl of popcorn, effectively bring her out of her heartfelt musings. The beginning of the next movie began playing, and El snuggled up to Mike. Hopper eyes them amused, but said nothing. He was probably still feeling bad for Mike and decided to let it slip this time. Even though the circumstances were not ideal, El had decided to take advantage of it. Mike was a far better pillow than the side of the couch she usually laid her head on.

And in the morning, all of them awoke on the couch, still in the clothes they had been wearing the night before. They all had secret soft little smiles on their faces. Even Hopper.

A/N: Welcome to the official, actual, end of Confessions: Sleepover Style! Thanks for all of the kind reviews, follows and favorites. I see them all, and they all mean the world to me. This chapter took a bit of a different turn, and I'm sorry if the character's reactions were not necessarily accurate. I tried my best. Thanks for reading?

~Climbergirlio